

HANDBOOK OF STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE READING COMPREHENSION IN A
SECOND LANGUAGE

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Abstract

It is known through different means that the learning a second language implicates several challenges in relation to reading comprehension; the levels of difficulty are different from one student to another. I created a *Handbook of Strategies to Enhance Reading Comprehension in a Second Language*, which was developed based on my experience as a literacy teacher in a second language, as well as from sources of information such as professional developments I have attended, interviewing, observing colleagues, information gathered from textbooks on reading comprehension, as well as research on the internet. Each of the strategies included in the *Handbook of Strategies to Enhance Reading Comprehension in a Second Language* has been used in a second language classroom and has been based on work created by literacy experts and researchers with a pedagogical intent; therefore, they are easy to understand and apply, with the idea of providing classroom teachers and other interested professionals with a beginners guide to follow and ideas that they can apply for the benefit of English language learners who they instruct. It would be a remarkable experience if the contribution of my handbook of strategies would reach, in addition to teachers, parents, and any other persons or organizations that are interested in the students of a second language effectively understanding the reading of any material in a second language.

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my family. Especially to my beloved grandparents who became my parents; Mami Olga, Papi Luis and to my Tio Oscar who will always live in my heart; I know you are proud of me in heaven.

To my daughter Valeria, you are my source of strength. I will always do my best to make you feel proud of me.

To my husband Juan, thank you for always pushing me to move forward and do my best at anything I pursue. Thank you for always reminding me how smart I am and being my companion in this journey.

To my aunt Jazmin, thank you for continuously supporting me. You have been a huge support since I was in undergrad. I would not have made it without your support.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Becoming an educator is a very satisfying experience as it is one of the most important achievements that one can develop as a person. As teachers, every day we make enormous efforts so that our knowledge is transmitted in a clear, striking, and convincing way to our students, trying to get their attention and involve them in the objectives that we intend to achieve. However, we cannot be unaware of realities that are specific to our students, such as cultural bias, background knowledge, language mastery level, and socioeconomic situations. For most students, these challenges are the causes of shyness and insecurity which might have a negative impact on their academic performances as well as in the second language acquisition process.

According to Calderon (2011), a teacher who has English language learners in their classroom has triple the work, teaching core subjects, basic language, and literacy. It is evident that many people are born with a teaching vocation, but this is not enough. A teacher does not always have within their reach the required training that allows them to successfully deliver instruction to English language learners. The quality of the instruction delivered causes a solid impact on the student's language learning process and skills development. Fenner and Snyder (201) have stated that every teacher who works with at least one student acquiring English is now an ESL teacher (p. 1).

Language is acquired by listening and reading, the more a student reads the more they learn. Therefore, reading comprehension is a vital skill that English learners must develop to

improve their language skills. Students may become proficient and fluent English speakers, but oral language is not enough, because reading is a fundamental and vital skill even beyond academics.

Reading is complex. Teaching children to read is challenging in part because comprehension is invisible (Servallo, 2018). In essence, comprehension is everything, but where should a teacher start? How can a teacher support an English language learner who is struggling with comprehension?

The purpose of this project is to share a handbook of strategies to enhance critical thinking and reading comprehension in a second language classroom to provide quality instruction to English learner students. What matters most in the education of ELs is the quality of instruction, not the language of instruction. (August & Shanahan, 2006, 2008,)”. Currently, the ELs population in the classroom is increasing. It is necessary that all classroom teachers are familiarized with and clearly understand strategies to support Els. This handbook provides some of those valuable tools that serve as a guide for teachers working with ELs, techniques, and strategies to enhance and assess reading comprehension, which is the ultimate goal when teaching a child how to read. As Jimenez (2011) argued:

Comprehension is the ability to understand, analyze, and interpret the text; for this, the engraved symbols must be personally reinterpreted. Thus, the debates can only be carried out within the reader's understanding of its meaning, since the interaction between the reader and the text is the basic understanding. (p, 84)

The handbook contains strategies I have had the opportunity to use in my classroom and has helped my students to interact with the text as well as improve their reading comprehension.

All strategies included are research-based and were created by literacy experts, educators, and researchers. The handbook will be structured in three categories of strategies to develop comprehension skills before reading, during reading, and after reading. Handbook sections include a variety of strategies to target reading skills such as setting purpose, activating and connecting previous knowledge, frontloading vocabulary, questioning, visualizing, metacognitive or inferential work, and more techniques that will help students become successful readers in a second language. In addition, some graphic organizers are included since I am a believer in scaffolding through chunking the text and text interaction by the usage of these powerful tools.

In my personal opinion, the opportunity that some of us have to access a training program will not be complete until we can share this achievement with those less fortunate. I am a faithful believer that education transforms people's minds and, therefore, families and society in general. Mandela, N. (2014). Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world. *Computer*, 8, 45.

The main beneficiaries of a handbook with strategies to enhance reading comprehension in a second language classroom are those teachers whose purpose is to teach English language learners to create meaning from the texts, and indirect beneficiaries are the English language learners who are taught by those teachers, and then, to all those who have access to it has as a source of research and training.

Maslow (1943) has suggested that there is no greater satisfaction for human beings than being interested in the well-being and growth of others; this is linked to a phrase that never goes out of style that says: "It is better to give than receive" (Kings James version, 1611, Acts 20:30). I am sure that the training work never ends, and I know that this handbook of strategies,

techniques, and tips to enhance reading comprehension will bring excellent results in favor of those with whom I can share them.

Taking an interest in others makes us better people, more sensitive to the needs of others. In this handbook, teachers find a good starting point to modify their teaching practices in favor to target the needs of English language learners' reading skills. It is a great pride for me to know that my contribution will begin to bear fruit for the different groups of students who will receive the legacy that I am leaving through my project.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Techniques are used in different activities of our daily routines; In fact, techniques are used in sports, in the development of any work activity, and particularly in the field of learning. Reading is complex. Teaching children to read is challenging in part because comprehension is invisible (Servallo, 2018). In essence, comprehension is everything, but where should a teacher start? How can a teacher support an English language learner who is striving with comprehension? It is worth pointing out that the level of rigor has increased for all students, and ELs must meet the same challenging content as their English proficient peers. As a result, teachers must have specialized skills and knowledge of techniques and resources to support English language learners in these practices (Fenner & Snyder, 2017).

Teaching Techniques

Teaching techniques are defined as the set of activities that the teacher structures so that the student builds knowledge, transform the problem, and evaluates it in addition to participating together with the student in the recovery of their own process. In this way, didactic techniques occupy a central place in the teaching-learning process so the teacher must plan and carry out activities to facilitate the construction of knowledge (Fuentes, 2001).

According to Estrada (1999), the pedagogical process is related to the idea that the teacher has knowledge about how to learn and how to build knowledge. Under the concept that the teacher has the education for teaching, teachers will design a program, plan a class, and

establish a certain relationship with the student; however, Fenner and Snyder (2017) noted that “teacher preparation often falls short, teachers were not provided with training to approach their work with ELs” (p. 1).

Reading Strategies Versus Reading Skills

Attewell (1990) defined skills as “the idea of competence, proficiency of the ability to do something well” (p.423). Mintzberg (1987) interpreted strategies as a plan, a sort of intended course of action. In relation to reading, Manoli, and Papadopoulou (2012) emphasized that

The terms strategies and skills are an integral part of the reading instruction and are constantly used in order to help learners comprehend the meaning of written texts, clarifying, therefore, the confusion between these two terms is of the utmost importance, as the way we define and implement them can have implications in the teaching of reading. (p. 1)

Reading skills may be seen as cognitive abilities, part of the generalized reading process, which a person is able to deploy when interacting with written texts (Urquhart & Weir, 1998, as cited in Manoli & Papadopoulou, 2012). As far as reading strategies can be defined as conscious, internally variable psychological techniques aimed at improving the effectiveness of or compensating for the breakdowns in reading comprehension, on specific reading tasks, and in specific contexts (Kammi, 2008). Moreover, strategies are reader-oriented, while skills are text-oriented (Urquhart & Weir, 1998, as cited in Kammi, 2008). Manoli and Papadopoulou (2012) remarked that strategies are flexible and adaptable since readers use a number of strategies according to the kind of text and the goal they have to accomplish. For instance, they are used

because there is a problem to solve or a goal to attain. Teachers can help improve student comprehension skills through the instruction of reading strategies (Küçükoğlu, 2013).

What is Reading Comprehension? Why Teach It?

Reading comprehension is the main purpose of reading and “is the result of the application of strategies to understand, remember and find the meaning of what has been read” (The Importance of Reading Comprehension, 2021). Camargo (2013) indicated that

We read to inform ourselves or to learn about multiple topics; also to know the opinions of others and share or reject them. Another purpose is to enjoy reading for entertainment since in this way we travel without leaving home, we get to know real or fantastic places and people, and experience sensations and emotions. All these purposes are only possible if we understand what we read. (p. 91)

If a person is not taught to comprehend a text by some mentor or teacher, they will not become a successful reader. Further, comprehension is enhanced when teachers make sure students understand what they are reading by providing effective instruction that will help the reader actively understand (The Content of Professional Development, 2000, as cited in, Reading Rockets, 2013).

It is remarkable that people, with appropriate support, become good readers (Shanahan, 2007). In fact, reading comprehension is important, not just for understanding text, but for broader learning, success in education, and employment (Khusniyah et al., 2019). It is even important for our social lives because of email, text, and social networking sites (Oakhill et al., 2014). A fundamental function of the school is to teach students to decode and read for learning purposes. If students cannot decode printed English, they cannot comprehend it (Moats, 2019).

The learning of comprehension must be permanent since after learning to decode students must go deeper into the use of reading to learn (Williams, 2000). If students want to get the most out of the materials they are assigned, they must learn to read critically or analytically. The idea here is that when we read something, the purpose is to try to understand what the author's intention is (Küçüköğlu, 2013).

Literacy teachers, in all grades, are called to develop reading comprehension in all curricular areas. Reading to learn assumes that the reader understands and extracts the main ideas of the text (Brown, 1984, as cited in Puente, 2004) and compels them to solve problems or perform tasks. Reading is more than decoding, since different comprehension processes are involved. Condemarín (1981), based on Barrett (1967) classified the cognitive and affective dimensions of reading comprehension. The use of reading strategies is considered effective for native speakers and can also be beneficial for students learning a new language (Fitzgerald & Noblit, 2000).

Factors Influencing Reading Comprehension in a Second Language

The development of reading skills has always been important because the ability to read opens opportunities for people to learn more about the world (Vargas, 2021). Yang (2016) noted that the process of reading is complicated. There are many factors that affect reading comprehension. The readers' background, classroom tasks, and strategies employed are among the major factors influencing reading comprehension (Geva, 2006).

Much is known about the different language proficiency levels through which English language learners progress and how it affects their ability to construct meaning from a text (Opitz & Guccione, 2009). Therefore, a student's developmental level is directly related to the

linguistic tasks the student is capable of performing (Bouchard, 2005). Opitz and Guccione (2009) described the levels of language proficiency as:

Starting level or students with limited English, *Emerging* or students who begin to understand simple phrases and sentences, *Developing* or students who feel comfortable in social conversations, *Expanding* or students with the ability to use academic vocabulary, lastly *Bridging* level or students who are proficient in conversational and academic English. (p.5-6)

Prior schooling in the L1, or a general lack of it is another influential factor. Children learning to read in their first language have shown that word-level reading skills are linked to phonological processing, but only marginally related to oral proficiency skills (Kuhl, 2001). In contrast, both phonological processing and oral proficiency skills have been implicated in reading comprehension (August & Shanahan, 2008). When reading in a second language, readers have access to their first language and often use their L1 as a reading strategy (Carson et al., 1990, as cited in Jiang, 2011).

Hudson (2007) acknowledged that background knowledge cannot be ignored when attempting to understand reading comprehension. For instance, Herrera and Murry (2015), argued that all new learning content taught must be related to previous knowledge or previous learning to be useful or relevant for the student. According to Background knowledge and ELLs: What teachers need to know (2021)

The fact that Students' have enough background knowledge on certain topics ensures that the lesson will be better understood. This knowledge works as the foundation on which

the rest of the lesson can be built. For ELLs, it can make a tremendous difference in their comprehension of the lesson and any related materials or texts.

Background knowledge, prior knowledge, and schema theory have separate definitions; however, they are all used by readers to make connections to a text. Background knowledge and prior knowledge can be defined as previous knowledge about a topic, while schema is thought of as a structure that is used for understanding (Murtha, 2017) that interrelates all the reader's knowledge about a particular topic (Richgels, 1982, as cited in Murtha, 2017). According to schema theory, comprehending a text is an interactive process between the reader's background knowledge and the text (Seymour, 2017). Text cannot be understood correctly without cultural background knowledge. In every text used to teach, many words and sentences are culture-loaded; in other words, they found that cultural knowledge plays a vital role in reading comprehension (Yang, 2017).

Efficient comprehension requires the ability to relate the textual material to one's background knowledge (Yang, 2017). Herrera and Murry (2015), argued that all new learning content taught must be related to previous knowledge or previous learning to be useful or relevant for the student. In conclusion, when students understand what they are reading and want to continue looking at a text, for any reason, that is a recipe to foster the development of reading comprehension. Understanding the reading struggles of all students, including ELLs, is critical in order to recognize the crucial skill of textual comprehension. Knowing what aspects define English language learners can give educators a better knowledge of how to help them build reading comprehension abilities, and this can be done through a variety of strategies (Lindeman, 2018).

Lastly, each student has their own learning style and intelligence. English language learners are not different (Bouchard, 2005). The Multiple Intelligence Theory (Gardner, 1983) proposed that children all learn material in different ways to assist in understanding their strengths and weaknesses. Knowing children's learning strengths and weaknesses will help teachers encourage students to try new ways of learning (Heming, 2008). Magfirah (2018) remarked that the learning style makes students feel comfortable in absorbing, acquiring, perceiving, and processing the information in their own way.

Gardner's (1983) theory mentioned seven types of intelligence: Interpersonal (appreciates group work), Intrapersonal (prefers working alone), Kinesthetic (needs movement), Linguistic/Verbal (understanding through speaking), Logical/Mathematical (uses numbers), Musical (Learns through rhythm and music), and Spatial (visual understanding) (Concept to Classroom, 2004, as cited in Heming, 2008). According to Yang (2016), learning style is individually characteristic, stable, and habitual. It is used to describe perceptual individual approaches to learning, i.e. how to perceive, store, retrieve, or recall information. Learning style seems to play a major role in academic achievement as well as in reading and listening comprehension skills (Braio, 1995; Purnomo, 2009; Saadi, 2012; Tanta, 2010, as cited in Magfirah, 2018).

Other Factors Influencing Reading Comprehension in a Second Language

Recent research in psycholinguistics shows that in order to comprehend the text the reader must have metalinguistic knowledge, which means that the reader is aware of the structure of the language, and knows how the texts are developed (Yang, 2016). Similarly, Vargas (2021) explained if children experience metalinguistic difficulties during reading activities like

recognizing syllables, words, phrases, and sentence boundaries it can also pose a challenge for comprehension.

Parental support is another important factor in child reading comprehension development, for instance, Cloud et al. (2009) manifested that English language learners begin to acquire literacy skills while with their families. However, some ELs may come from families with no educational background (Haynes, 2012). Due to a lack of parental support and unstable family life, many students have limited experiences and limited prior knowledge, resulting in inadequate language, vocabulary development, and poor comprehension (Brooks et al., 1997). Subsequently, motivation is essential in learning and reading. Some researchers even claim that motivation and engagement are vital parts of the ability to read; reading competence (Roe, 2014, as cited in Hansen, 2016). Hence, working with student motivation is essential for good reading instruction (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000, as cited in Hansen, 2016). Lastly, the instructional materials and methods used to teach English language learners are not adequate Reid (1987). According to Reid (1987), ESL instructors

Often use methods and materials that have been developed with the learning needs of native speakers of English in mind. In many cases, neither students nor teachers are aware that difficulty in learning class material, high frustration levels, and even failure may not rest solely in the material itself. (p. 91)

Optimization of Reading Comprehension Instruction for English Learners

In the specific case of learning an L2, teachers optimize a student's comprehension by providing scaffolding when including diverse comprehension strategies in their lessons.

Research indicates that reading in a first language is different from reading in a second language

(Bernhardt, 2021). Language learners who are advanced readers in their first language may not be advanced readers in their second language (Zabbari, 2016). In some cases, English learners pay more attention to decoding the text; as a result, they struggle to comprehend what they read, which makes teaching comprehension strategies a necessity (Harvey, 2007). Reading strategies could be taught to help students overcome their comprehension challenges. Moreover, readers must learn that reading is an interactive process involving decoding words and constructing meaning. Teachers need to teach students to become more active, strategic readers as well as proficient decoders (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007). In 2018, Servallo mentioned that a skilled reader is strategic, indicating that a reader uses strategies to make meaning from a text. Strategic reader reading refers to thinking about reading in ways that enhance learning and understanding, in addition, comprehension instruction is not about teaching strategies for strategies' sake, nor is it about making sure students master the strategies. It is about teaching children to use strategies purposefully to read any text for any reason (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007).

Li (2021), pointed out that some pedagogical approaches are put forward to help readers to develop successful strategies including pre-reading activities such as brainstorming for appropriate background knowledge or imagining text content from a title, activities while reading such as discussing word formation and word meanings in context, and post-reading global comprehension activities requiring readers to summarize or retell the text. Pluralize the teaching process, in other words, to teach in multiple ways to help students learn, to “convey what it means to understand something well,” and demonstrate your own understanding (Gardener, 2013, as cited in Northern Illinois University Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning, 2020). Teachers can help improve student comprehension skills through the instruction of reading strategies (Küçükoğlu, 2013).

Reading strategies are the different methods and efforts a reader knows and is able to use in order to comprehend (Roe, 2014, as cited in Hansen, 2016). Shell Education (2007) defined three major comprehension strategies groups or phases:

Before reading strategies help to reduce uncertainty in the reading task, therefore teachers should motivate students by assessing prior knowledge, introducing new vocabulary, and finally, their metacognitive awareness, *During reading strategies* are activities in which students read aloud or silently; engaged in answering questions, teachers can focus on helping students to make connections with their schemata, creating mental images to enhance comprehension, and preparing for the synthesis of information. *After reading strategies*, students reflect on what they have learned and the teacher guides them through follow-up activities, such as finding the main idea, summarizing, and more (p. 12-14).

Most foreign language reading specialists view reading as interactive. To encourage students to use effective strategies when reading in a foreign language, the teacher can develop simple exercises to elicit information via targeted strategies (Toprak & Almacioğlu, 2009). Similarly, Hansen, (2016) explained each stage of reading and emphasizes that it is vital that the teacher ascertains that students are active in all these phases.

Pre-reading activities are done before reading commences and draw the reader's attention to different elements of the text; in addition to expressing a purpose for reading, and awakening the reader's prior knowledge. Activities *during reading* might be note-taking, systemizing information for instance writing down keywords or using different forms of visualizing concepts or words, and underlining. It is important to read actively, and, implement means of increasing understanding if comprehension is lacking through

re-reading, re-thinking, or merely asking for help; using a metacognitive ability. *Post-reading activities* are all the things a reader does to gain understanding and knowledge of a topic, such as writing mind-maps, keywords, summaries, texts, questions to the texts, or answering questions to the texts. (p.11)

Teachers benefit from understanding the fact that ELLs need more support in order to be able to process language, and activate their background knowledge; as a result, they provide more scaffolding for these students to improve their comprehension (Brown & Broemmel, 2011).

Additionally, teachers need to rethink and reorder the teaching of literacy skills to reduce the gap in English language learners' reading comprehension (Calderon, 2011).

Chapter Three: Project Design

In this chapter, I establish the justification for creating a Handbook of Strategies focused on enhancing reading comprehension in a second language. In other words, I explain the reason why it is worth finding a solution to the challenges in reading comprehension that English language learners face and mention the contribution that the manual will make by providing strategies that teachers can use to support ELs. Teaching reading strategies is a key element in student comprehension. However, many teachers lack a solid foundation for teaching these reading comprehension strategies (Küçüköğlu, 2013).

The proposal to create a Handbook of Strategies to enhance reading comprehension in a second language was carried out based on the fact that many ELLs are weak in reading comprehension. Second language learners face many problems when trying to improve reading comprehension; therefore, the aim of my project is to describe and provide a selection of the strategies that will allow teachers to provide quality and scaffolded instruction that target the reading comprehension needs of the English learner students they serve.

This project addresses the fact that many English language learners struggle with reading comprehension. There are several components to this problem. First, students have not been able to develop the basic competence of reading comprehension of a second language which hinders their ability to analyze and synthesize the contents of the texts they read. Second, according to observations and lived experiences in my classroom, most ELs retain the knowledge with the first level of comprehension, which is the literal level; they can repeat only what is in the text but

are not able to understand what is not implicit due to the lack of background knowledge and vocabulary. Third, beginner teachers or classroom teachers working with ELs do not have the training to use or rethink strategies to target ELs' reading comprehension needs. Fourth, students do not adequately execute the strategies taught during their classes; thus, they do not achieve an understanding of the texts read.

A second purpose of the handbook is to collaborate with students and other teachers in the teaching-learning process to help and promote the integration and participation of English language learner students in the classroom's daily activities as well as a scaffold to help them master the standards, skills, and competencies required in their grade curriculum.

Reading in a second language is considered to be more challenging than reading in a first language as the reader often does not have adequate vocabulary knowledge, cultural background information, and sentence structuring ability, all of which play a key role in reading comprehension (Er, 2005 as cited in Balci, 2017). It is essential to develop this ability to be able to build the exact meaning of what each text intends to convey, and in this way, knowledge is acquired and can be put into practice. Reading comprehension in a second language stimulates the development of the capacities to receive and interpret the information and to elaborate the critical analysis. Clearly, there are large gaps in current practices in relation to English language learners' reading skills.

The *Handbook of Strategies to Enhance Reading Comprehension in a Second Language* will be organized as follows:

Pre-reading: Before starting a lesson, teachers have to examine ELs' previous knowledge or known information on the topic. Without a clear idea of the topic, it is not possible for a reader to approach the lesson properly. Previous knowledge is key to constructing

meaning from the text. For this very reason, pre-reading strategies such as modeling thinking aloud, using illustrations to interact with texts before reading, frontloading key vocabulary, using sentence frames to scaffold language while making predictions, and KWL charts are useful. These strategies promote interaction with the text and are important for comprehension to take place.

Activities *during reading* are important to read actively and are the vehicle for increasing comprehension through re-reading, re-thinking or confirming the knowledge gathered from the pre-reading phase. Some good strategies during this stage of the reading process include: asking and answering DOK1 questions, “right there questions,” jotting, making inferences, systemizing information, underlining, and writing down keywords or repeated words that, later on, students will use to identify the main idea. This is the phase where comprehension is mostly targeted.

Post-reading activities are the activities that the teacher uses to assess what students have learned. These are follow-up activities to reflect on after finishing the reading, focused on the understanding and knowledge gained. Some after-reading activities are writing mind-maps, keywords, summaries, answering Dok2 or high-level thinking questions about the texts, or answering questions. In this phase, oral comprehension can be targeted by strategies, such as think, pair, and share, peer reading, and more.

There is no clear or perfect technique to enhance reading comprehension, but these strategies provide the scaffolds for English language learners. Notably, Calderon (2011) supported the idea that teachers need to rethink and reorder the teaching of literacy skills to reduce the gap in English language learners’ reading comprehension. As teachers, the goal is that the student will develop the competence that a good reader must master in order to enrich their knowledge and

language. For all of these reasons, I believe there is justification for a Handbook of Strategies to Enhance Reading Comprehension in a Second Language, especially since it has been shown that students are not developing their ability to analyze and interpret texts, or their creation or illustration skills, or even participating during the learning process, due to a lack of reading comprehension.

Handbook of Strategies to Enhance Reading Comprehension in a Second Language

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2022

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Introduction

Reading is complex. Teaching children to read is challenging in part because comprehension is invisible (Servallo, 2018). In essence, comprehension is everything, but where should a teacher start? How can a teacher support an English language learner who is struggling with comprehension?

This Handbook is full of strategies that I have found effective and engaging for my students who are learning a second language through content. Most of the strategies found in this manual are the same used with native speaker students but they have been tweaked to target our language learners' reading comprehension needs. In some strategies, I have added a graphic organizer or a sort of template that can be provided to each student to incorporate the visual support much needed. As we know, hands-on learning, visual support, and opportunities for oral responses are essential for language learners; therefore, I have included the creation of interactive organizers as foldable, role-play activities, and more in order to target different learning styles. The handbook is organized in order to enhance reading comprehension during three stages of the reading process, activities before, during, and after reading a text.

I hope you enjoy these activities as much as I do and that they help you target your students' reading skills challenges as they help me and my students when working with text written in the target language.

Before Reading

Purpose of before reading strategies: To assess previous knowledge, frontload vocabulary, set a purpose of reading, and scaffold interaction with a new text. Sentences frames are included to support language output and promote confidence.

Before Reading Menu

Procedure:

- Read the title and have a 2-minute discussion about it in order to clarify any misconceptions.
- Provide a menu with questions and let students choose one question to answer.

Where do you think the story is happening? The story is happening in...	Who do you think the main character is? The main character is... because...	After reading the title. What do you think the story will be about? The story will be about...
Write three things you know about the topic. I know that...	Do you think this book is a real or make-believe story? Why? I think the story is... because...	Based on the pictures and title. Do you think the story will be fun, sad, or scary? Why? The story will be... because...

The teacher can create their own menu depending on the language level, genre, or students' needs.

Let's Talk Go to The Learning Carousel

. Procedure:

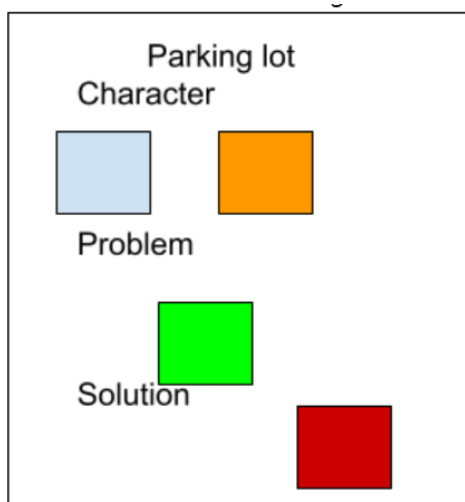
- On the chart paper, the teacher writes a question to activate content about the reading, or asks students to write a predictive sentence.
- Students will preview the text.
- Students will walk around the room and jot down their thoughts or prediction.
- After reading the text, you can refer back to the text to check answers or confirm predictions.

The teacher can add a word bank to scaffold vocabulary.

Sticky Notes Parking Lot

Procedure:

- Write down some questions about the upcoming topic or book.
- Give students the opportunity to preview the text.
- Ask students to answer or write down their own questions, then they will sort them according to the content.



Using Illustrations to Introduce Vocabulary

Procedure:

- Show pictures related to the topic.
- Partner talk: have partners discuss how pictures could be related to the text.
- Show another picture.
- Tell students the vocabulary word and its meaning.

Word	
Picture 1	Picture 2

KWL Chart

. Procedure:

- Ask students to complete the left and center column before reading and then complete the last column once they have read the text.

What do I already know?	What I want to Know?	What did I learn?
I know... because...	Write questions about the reading. I want to learn...	I learned...

Question words				
How?	Who?	What?	When?	Why?
¿Cómo?	¿Quién?	¿Qué?	¿Cuándo?	¿Por qué?

Teachers can use the chart as a flipbook or a collaborative anchor chart in which the whole class will jot their ideas.

Introduce Vocabulary with A Word Map

Procedure

- Pre-select keywords from an upcoming text.
- Explain the meaning with student-friendly definitions.
- Provide examples of how it is used.
- Ask students to repeat the word three times.
- Engage students in the competition of the organizer.
- Ask students to say the word again.

Word	It means	Illustration
Use the new word in a sentence		

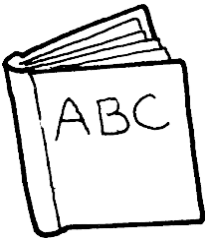
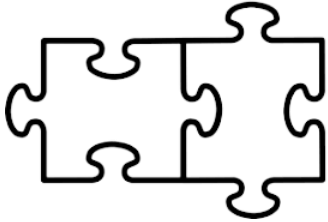
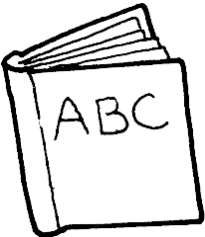
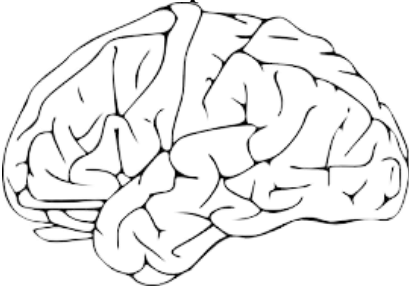
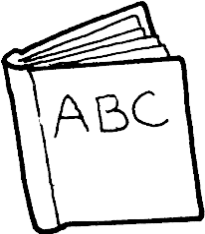
Teachers can print and laminate it to facilitate multiple uses.

It can be used as a mat for the new vocabulary introduction activity.

Question Cards

Procedure

- Give students cards to answer pre-reading questions which encourage oral language production and collaborative work.

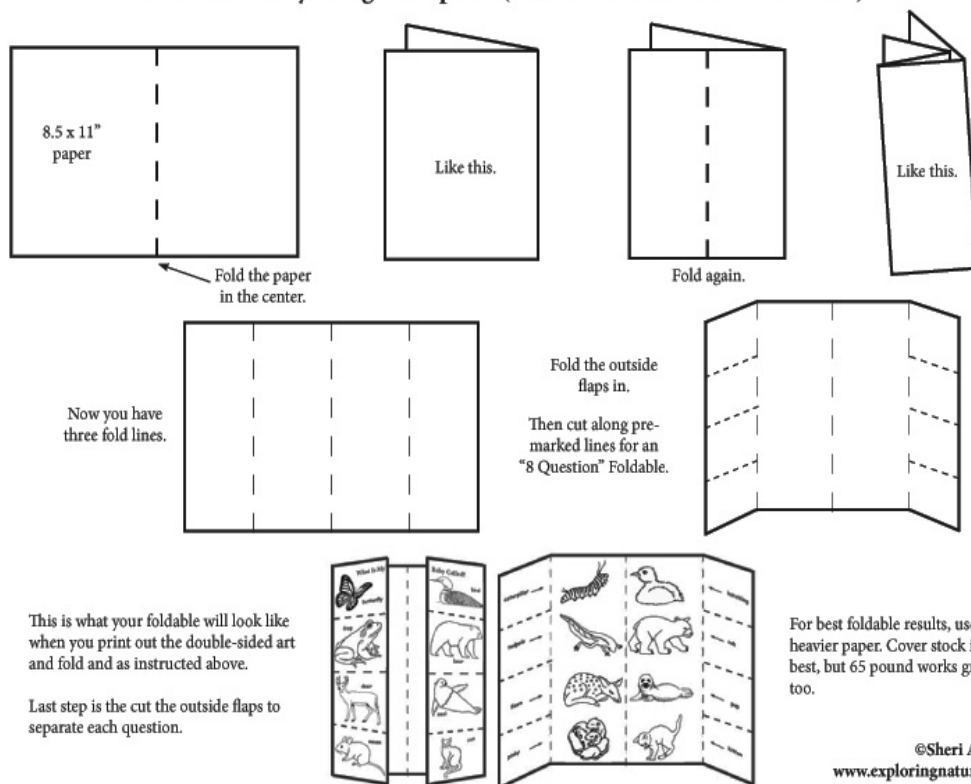
<p><u>Preview</u> What is the genre?</p>  <p>The genre is ...</p>	<p><u>Connect</u> What does this story remind you of?</p>  <p>It reminds me of ...</p>	<p><u>Predictions</u></p>  <p>Think Pair share</p>
<p><u>Previous knowledge</u> What I know about the topic?</p>  <p>I know ...</p>	<p><u>Questioning</u> What do you wonder about the book?</p> <p>Write questions you have about the text and share them with a friend.</p>	<p><u>Infer</u> What the picture tells you about the text?</p>  <p>I think...</p>

Introduce Vocabulary with A Foldable

Procedure

- Pre-select keywords from an upcoming text or let students skim the text for unknown words.
- Explain the meaning with student-friendly definitions or with use text features to let students figure them out.

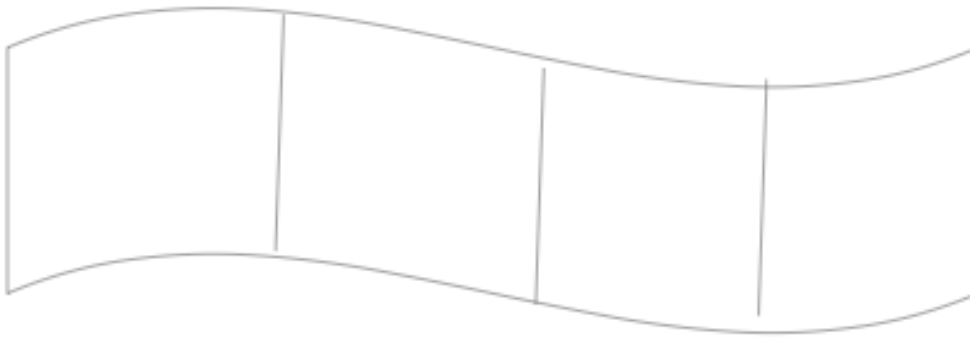
Foldable Activity Design Template: (8.5 x 11" sheet for 5.5 x 8.5" Result)



Introduce Vocabulary with a Comic Strip

Procedure

- Pre-select keywords from an upcoming text or let students skim the text for unknown words.
- Explain the meaning with student-friendly definitions use the text feature to let students figure them out.
- Ask the student to create a comic and use the words




During Reading


These strategies are important and help students read actively; they are the vehicle for increasing comprehension through re-reading, re-thinking, or confirming the knowledge gathered from the pre-reading phase.

Picture Summary

While reading, the teacher asks students to draw a picture of what they just read.

Then, using their own words students explain what the section, paragraph, or text is about.





Highlighting and Note-taking

Reading and highlighting will benefit students and allow them to focus on important information and interesting facts. Note-taking gives students a structure to organize their ideas and easily refer back to when needed.

Procedure:

- Provide students with a copy of the reading.
- Read the selection and model how to highlight the main idea and important details. The teacher will think aloud to make sure students understand why that information has been highlighted.
- Model highlighting keywords, repeated words, and text features. Avoid full sentences, and use marks like * for very important information.
- Model taking notes by using simple organization techniques like boxes and bullets, T charts, and two or three-column charts.

	Main idea:
•	
•	
•	
•	

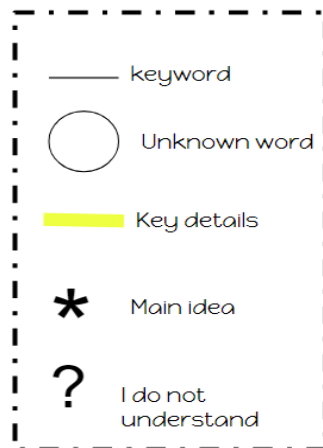
Text Symbols or Text Coding

Text coding is a modern-day take on highlighting and note-taking. Students use a class-specific system of codes that consists of symbols to make connections with their text while they are reading. The symbols can be established by the teacher or the class, or symbols and their accompanying representations can be found online or in various reading comprehension teaching aids.

Procedure

- Provide students with a copy of the reading.
- Read the selection
- Students will highlight, underline or write symbols to represent that they have found the main idea and important details.
- Annotations can be made next to the selections read.

Examples of codes



About-Point

The purpose of this strategy is to enhance comprehension during independent reading. “About” is a category or item and a “point” is defined as what the author wants the reader to know about the category or item.

Procedure

- Ask students to read the text in chunks or paragraphs.
- Write the “about” (categories or items).
- Students then write the “point” (what the author wants them to learn.).

About-Point Activity Sheet

Text: _____
 Page: _____ Paragraph or Section: _____

This section is about _____
 and the point is _____

Text: _____
 Page: _____ Paragraph or Section: _____

This section is about _____
 and the point is _____

Text: _____
 Page: _____ Paragraph or Section: _____

This section is about _____
 and the point is _____

Text: _____
 Page: _____ Paragraph or Section: _____

This section is about _____
 and the point is _____

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Metacognitive Strategies **33**



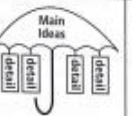
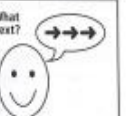
Reciprocal Teaching

The purpose of this strategy is for students to take leadership in the comprehension process by asking questions during reading.

Procedure

- Ask students to read the text in chunks or paragraphs.
- Then, as a group stop, and
 - Generate questions about what they are reading.
 - Clarify doubts
 - Summarize
 - Lastly, predict what will happen next.

Reciprocal Teaching Group Guide

 Question	 Problem-Solve	 Summarize	 Predict
---	--	--	--

Group Members: _____

Group Teacher: _____

1. Read: (section, page) _____

2. Questions: _____

3. Identify Difficult Parts: _____

Solutions: _____

4. Summarize: _____

5. Predictions: _____

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Socio-effective Learning Strategies

After Reading

Post-reading activities are the activities that the teacher uses to assess what students have learned. These are follow-up activities to reflect on after finishing the reading, focused on the understanding and knowledge gained.

Disappearing Note

This is a during-reading strategy that helps students summarize and/or find the theme.

Summarizing improves students' ability to find themes and central ideas faster and more smoothly.

Procedure

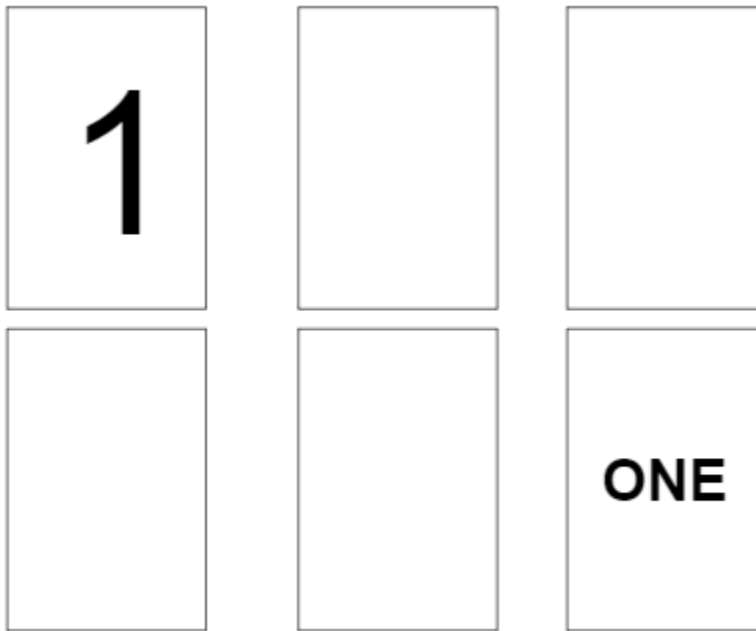
- Students read a text and write a short summary of that section.
- Students will continue to write short summaries for each section on a large Post-it. Once students are finished with their summaries, they will then take a smaller Post-it note and condense their findings to create a smaller summary of the text.
- Students will repeat this process with an even smaller Post-it note eliminating even more irrelevant information.
- Once students have their smallest summary Post-it finished, they will take an even smaller note and write what they think the central idea of the story was from their final summary.

Concentration Reading and Memory Game

A fun way for students to work on their reading, along with memory skills and grammar or vocabulary is with concentration.

Procedure

- Make cards that match in some way. They can be story sequences, words with definitions or pictures, or text structures.
- In groups of 4, students place the cards face down on their desks in a random position.
- They take turns choosing two to see if they match.

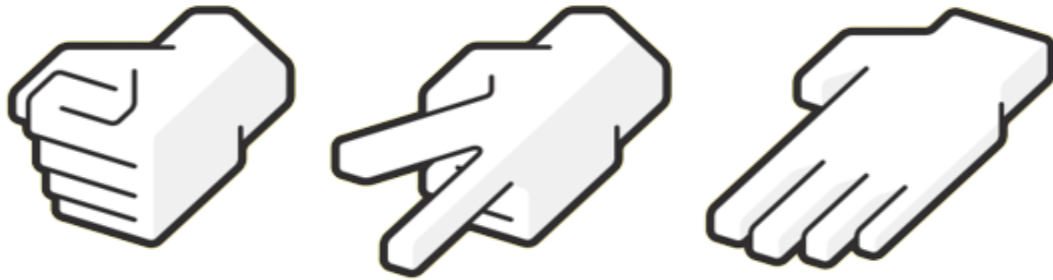


Rock-Scissor-Paper

After a read-aloud or at the end of reading any text, the teacher can assess comprehension and understanding with this whole group activity that requires movement and interaction.

Procedure:

- The teacher writes questions and answers on paper.
- Cut strips with the questions and answers.
- Give each student a mix of question-and-answer papers.
- Then, students must go around the class to find their matches. Once they do, they can do rock-scissor-paper and the winner takes both papers and gets one point.
- The winner is the person with the most points at the end of the activity.

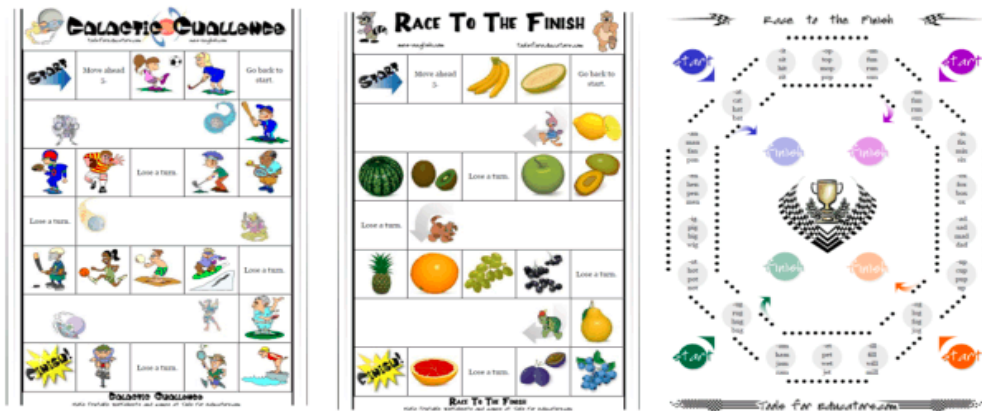


Problem/Advice Board Game

Board games can be a fun way to assess, check for understanding, and push students to think beyond the text.

Procedure

- Create a board game with some problems found in the plot of a story.
- Have students read it.
- Have students provide advice on how the character might solve the problem.



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Tools to create board games

<https://www.toolsforeducators.com/boardgames>

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Chapter Five: Conclusion

The development of this project helped me understand more of what I learned during my professional training at Greensboro College. With the creation of the *Handbook of Strategies to Enhance Reading Comprehension in a Second Language*, I will support the teachers who instruct English learners that are at different academic levels who master the language at different levels and have different ages. The principal objective is to help my colleagues find resources that are effective for ELs with resources that scaffold their reading skills and help learners confidently interact with the written texts. In addition, the strategies that have been included in my manual have considered the cultural, social, and background knowledge that becomes determining factors in the development of reading comprehension in a second language.

The problem that exists at all levels for the reading comprehension of a second language comes from many years ago, and in the same way, shows enormous efforts have been made to try to minimize this deficiency that brings delay and even frustration to many students. For the elaboration of the *Handbook of Strategies to Enhance Reading Comprehension in a Second Language*, I have included research-based strategies which were created by literacy experts and researchers as well as my personal experience along with strategies that I have had the opportunity to use in my classroom. Therefore, I consider these strategies to be effective and engaging. Additionally, teachers can learn from other teachers' best practices; so, using the experiences of several colleagues who work with ELs daily was an essential tool and a great source of information as well as texts used during my school's PLC meeting that explain and

exemplify the correct way to design and structure a strategy that allows obtaining the objective for which it was created.

I have put myself in the position of my students who, for different reasons, find it difficult to comprehend a written text in a second language. From this perspective, I managed to understand that the family context plays an important role since it is in this nucleus where there is motivation or discouragement. At times there could be situations that simply go unnoticed related to the habit of reading or the appreciation of different television programs or videos on the internet that promote the mental and analytical development of individuals. However, there is a situation among learners that means they might rather deal with long periods of time in hobbies, such as video games or content that contribute almost nothing to strengthening the brain's ability to understand the issues that could really help in a positive way related to development of the language from an early age. As a result, what matters most in the education of ELs is the quality of instruction, not the language of instruction (August & Shanahan, 2006; 2008). In the field of reading comprehension development, there is still much to be done, starting with governments adopting policies to bring educational programs that work for the benefit of the newcomer ELs. Educational institutions have a responsibility for their part since classrooms are one of the best scenarios to capture the attention and interest of students through audio-visual strategies as well as written activities that do not become monotonous and boring. The practice has shown that constant experience with pedagogical aids, such as images, notices, and information in a foreign language, support the individual trying to understand the messages expressed in them.

Since the number of English language learners is continuously growing, it has become an urgent necessity to find a solution to the challenges in reading comprehension that ELs face.

Therefore, classroom teachers need the tools needed to facilitate instruction for ELs. It is my intention and my wish that the handbook that I have created helps reduce the high levels of deficiency in reading comprehension of second language learners, trusting that each of the strategies that are included provides a guide for teachers who have in their hands the delicate responsibility of training individuals who in the very near future will be part of the productive activity for their families, their communities, and the country in general.

I know that there are many of us who are interested in future generations acquiring sufficient tools today to become fundamental pieces in the ethical and professional strengthening that makes society a safe place through the development of each one of its individuals. We are at the precise moment in history where mainly those of us who can train people to do our best for the welfare of society in general, and that is why our work should not be passive, much less stagnate in our professional development. It will be of great satisfaction to find out that my work is part of a library to which many people have access, more than fulfilling the graduation requirement.

I believe that all of us who can have arrived in this world must sow a seed so that others can be benefited by something the best Teacher of all said: "It is better to give than receive" (Kings James version, 1611, Acts 20:30). Right now, there are many students who are waiting for support. So, teachers can and should give what we have, which means the skills and tools to teach, a treasure that once the individual obtains it no one can ever take from their hands.

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